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"Southern Regional Education Board"

I Definition of the Problem

After World War II, the South was faced with about the same problems in higher education as was the rest of the country: increased demands for educational services and not enough money to meet them. States faced demands for immediate enrollment increases in all phases of college work, but the problem was greatest in the more expensive professional fields such as medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine. It was found that there were enough schools in the region to take care of the demand if students could attend these schools without regard to state borders. Some device was needed to eliminate the barriers without penalizing either students from the states which did not have adequate facilities, or the states and schools which would be furnishing such facilities.

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II Method of Solution

A system of interstate contracts was devised whereby the state which did not have a school of veterinary medicine, medicine, dentistry, or social work adequate enough to serve all its citizens, could purchase places at colleges and universities in other states through a central agency organized by the Southern states. The sending states would pay the receiving schools through the regional agency a set amount per student per year roughly equal to the difference between what the student pays and what the actual cost of his education to the receiving school would be. The agency was established in 1949 as the Southern Regional Education Board.

Its broad mandate, under the interstate compact which governs its activities, is "to submit plans and recommendations to the states from time to time for their approval and adoption by appropriate legislative action for

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the development, establishment, acquisition, operation and maintenance of educational schools and institutions within the geographical limits of the regional area of the states, of such character and type and for such educational purposes, professional, technological, scientific, literary, or otherwise, as they may deem and determine to be proper, necessary or advisable...the Board shall have the power to enter into such agreements or arrangements with any of the states and with educational institutions or agencies, as may be required in the judgment of the Board, to provide adequate services and facilities for the graduate, professional, and technical education for the benefit of the citizens of the respective state residing within the region...."

Other devices developed by SREB to serve states and the colleges and universities in those states grew out of the need for a planning and coordinating organization which could look at the total picture of higher education in the region. Such devices included memoranda of agreement signed by various cooperating schools and agencies for the purpose of planning jointly in the development of educational opportunities and in the improvement of the quality of programs in specific fields like forestry, educational television, and statistics Activities carried on under these memoranda include jointly-sponsored summer institutes, joint recruitment efforts, and cooperative planning of courses to avoid unnecessary duplication among the states and institutions in the region.

Research generally into the problems confronting higher education in the South has become an increasingly important function of SREB. Specific fields, like mental health, dental education, and the need for teachers of exceptional children, have been surveyed in the states. On the basis of the surveys recommendations were made for appropriate regional and local action. Also, a major effort to help colleges and universities in studying their educational and management operations was launched during 1956. This was made possible through a grant for this purpose by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

III General Applicability

That the Southern states have been successful to a degree in their efforts at regional cooperation in higher education has been demonstrated by the fact that since its inception, two other regions of the United States, the Western states and territories and the New England states, have organized similar organizations with the same aims and with similar programs.

The Southern states, as well as the other regions, are looking to the regional education compacts with increasing confidence as student enrollments continue to increase year by year. In many states planning for the future in higher education, consideration is being given more and more to the concept of service to a group of states rather than planning within the boundaries of one state and thereby increasing the chances of waste and unnecessary duplication.

Throughout the eight years of SREB's existence, it has contributed the following developments in the field of higher education: the use of interstate contracts, to avoid unnecessary duplication of expensive graduate and professional schools, cooperative planning for curriculum development, regional planning for increased opportunities in higher education, and region-wide research into general problems of college and university operations.

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